

When I first met Bob Gates, he had the best job in the world-President of Texas A&M University. It was a job he loved, and a job in which he was truly beloved by my fellow Aggies.

He gave up the best job to serve in one of the toughest jobs in the world-U.S. Secretary of Defense during a time of war. He did not seek this job, and he did not lobby for this job, but I am grateful he accepted it-from both President Bush and President Obama.

There is only one thing that could have convinced him to leave A&M, an institution to which he was deeply committed-the same love of country and sense of duty that had led him to a lifetime of public service-27 years as an intelligence professional serving 6 presidents, including 9 years on the National Security Council and three years as Director of the CIA.

I have never editorialized or made predictions in this Caucus, but I will make an exception this one time. I believe history will record that Dr. Robert Gates was the right person in the right place at the right time to serve our nation as Secretary of Defense during a critical time of war and transition.

From cold warrior to post cold war leader, Bob Gates has always personified the highest ideals of leadership-integrity, vision, hard work, discipline, intelligence and inspiration.

Above all his well-deserved awards and titles, what I will always remember the most about Bob Gates is the deep respect he has shown to those who have chosen to serve our nation in uniform. It is a respect I saw years ago, when, as President of A&M, he chose to run, long before sunrise, with the Aggie Corps of Cadets, our future military officers.

Please welcome a genuine patriot, our 22nd Secretary of Defense, the Honorable Robert M. Gates.